

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SAIGON 04124 010704Z

12

ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3194

C O N F I D E N T I A L S A I G O N 4 1 2 4

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MP MOPS VS

SUBJ: MILITARY ACTION AT DUC HUE AND ELSEWHERE IN MR 3

THE FOLLOWING AMCONGEN BIEN HOA MESSAGE ACTION AMEMB SAIGON INFO
AMCONGEN CAN THO AMCONGEN DANANG AMCONGEN NHA TRANG REPEATED
FYI AND ACTION QOTE

1. A RANGER COMPANY AT DUC HUE WELL SUPPORTED BY AIR STOOD OFF
A DETERMINED BATTALION-SIZE ATTACK BY THE 5TH NVA DIV MAR 27 AND
28, AFTERWARD COUNTING AT LEAST 96 COMMUNIST KIA AGAINST ONLY 29
FRIENDLY KIA, 27 WOUNDED AND 6 MIA. FRIENDLY LOSSES WERE AUGMENTED
BY AN ADDITIONAL 16 DEPENDENTS KIA AND TWO WOUNDED IN THE DEPENDENTS
LIVING AREA NEAR THE RANGER BASE. THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT
WITH THIS ACTION THE COMMUNISTS HAVE OPENED UP A NEW AREA OF LONG
TERM OPERATIONS BASED IN THE PARROTS BEAK AREA OF CAMBODIA.

2. DEPUTY III CORPS COMMANDER MGEN HIEU DISCUSSED THE DUC HUE
ENGAGEMENT AND THE HIGH LEVEL OF MILITARY ACTION ELSEWHERE IN
MR 3 WHEN WE MET AT NOON TODAY. THIS REPORT IS ALSO BASED ON
INFORMATION OBTAINED BY OUR RLO/DAO FROM THE 25TH DIV G-2 MAR 29.

3. THE ACTION AT DUC HUE BEGAN AT 0330 MAR 27 WHEN THE NVA
ATTACKED THE RANGER BASE CAMP ABOUT FIVE MILES FROM THE CAMBODIAN
BORDER AFTER A STRONG ARTILLERY AND MORTAR BARRAGE. SAPPERS
PENETRATED THE BASE PERIMETER WHEN THE GROUND ACTION BEGAN AND
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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 SAIGON 04124 010704Z

HELD ON FOR SEVERAL HOURS BEFORE THE RANGERS REESTABLISHED CONTROL.

ONLY ONE OF THREE RANGER COMPANIES WAS IN THE CAMP AT THE TIME. THE OTHER TWO RETURNED FROM LONG RANGE PATROLS AFTER THE COMMUNISTS BROKE OFF MAR 28. CAPTURED DOCUMENTS IDENTIFY THE ATTACKING FORCE AS A BATTALION OF THE E-6 REGIMENT, 5TH NVA DIV. ACCORDING TO MGEN HIEU, ANOTHER BATTALION FROM THE 5TH DIV (NOT YET IDENTIFIED) DEPLOYED INITIALLY ALONG THE SINGLE ACCESS ROAD FROM THE NORTH, PRESUMABLY TO AMBUSH ARVN RELIEF UNITS. THIS BATTALION AS WELL AS SOME AMPHIBIOUS TANKS SPOTTED NEABY ON THE CAMBODIAN BORDER WITHDREW WHEN NVA FORCES FAILED TO TAKE THE RANGER BASE.

4. THE COMMANDER OF THE ARVN 46TH REGIMENT (25THDIV) WAS UNFORTUNATELY LOST WHEN A 107MM ROCKET SCORED A DIRECT HIT ON HIS BUNKER IN BIVOUAC NORTH OF THE RANGER BASE CAMP ALONG THE ACCESS ROAD AT 0400 HOURS MAR 29. ELEMENTS OF THE 25TH UNDER HIS COMMAND HAD GONE TO THE DUC HUE AREA TO REINFORCE BUT HAD NOT BEEN INVLED IN THE ACTION THROUGH MAR 28.

5. AIR ACTION INCLUDING PARTICULARLY A-1'S AND AC-119'S APPARENTLY PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE NOT ONLY AGAINST ENEMY PERSONNEL BUT ALSO IN ELIMINATING SEVERAL 75MM RECOILLESS RIFLE POSITIONS. AN INTERESTING FEATURE OF THE AIR ACTION WAS THE EVASION OF FOUR SA-7 ROUNDS BY AN AC-119. SEEING THE ROUNDS FIRED WHILE HE WAS AT 9,500 FEET, THE PILOT TURNED SHARPLY AND SIMULTANEOUSLY DROPPED HIGH INTENSITY FLARES WHICH DREW TWO OF THE SA-7 ROUNDS. THE OTHER TWO BY-PASSED THE AC-119 AND EXPLODED AT 10,000 FEET.

6. OTHER REPORTING HAS RECORDED THE LOSS OF A POL STORAGE TANK FROM AN NVA ATTACK ON CU CHI BASE CAMP MAR 27 AND HEAVY ABF (200 ROUNDS) ON TRUNG LAP OUTPOST NORTHEAST OF TRANG BANG THE NIGHT OF MAR 28. MGEN HIEU THOUGHT THIS SHARPLY INCREASED NVA ACTIVITY IN NORTHERN HAU NGHIA WAS DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE DUC HUE ATTACK, INTENDED TO DIVERT GVN FORCES FROM RELIEF OF THE DUC HUE GARRISON. HE DID NOT, HOWE ER, SEE ANY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THIS ACTIVITY IN HAU NGHIA AND THE SHARP INCREASE OF INCIDENTS IN PHUOC TUY PROVINCE (13 ON MAR 28 ALONE). HE ALSO BELIEVES THAT THE DUC HUE ATTACK NOW EXPLAINS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN NVA 5TH DIV FORWARD CP AT CU PHI IN THE PARROTS BEAK OF CAMBODIA AND HE EXPECTS FURTHER ACTION FROM THE 5TH EITHER IN THE DUC HUE AREA OR IN TAY NINH. (RECENT OB DATA SHOWS THE 174 AND 275 REGIMENTS OF THE 5TH NVA DIV STILL TO BE IN TAY NINH.)

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 SAIGON 04124 010704Z

THE EVIDENT PRESENCE OF NVA ANTI-AIRCRAFT CAPABILITY IN THE ACTION AT DUC HUE INDICATES THE CAREFUL PREPARATION OF AN ATTACK WHICH WAS EXPECTED TO DRAW VNAF REACTION. MGEN HIEU SAID MR 3 IS NOW ALSO ALERT TO THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE NVA 9TH DIV MAY PUSH OUTWARD FROM ITS POSITIONS IN NORTHWEST BINH DUONG PROVINCE SOUTHWARD ALONG THE SAIGON RIVER CORRIDOR TO PUT PRESSURE IN THIS AREA ON GVN FORCES. ACCORDING TO G-2 OF THE 25TH DIV, DOCUMENTS CAPTURED IN THE DUC HUE ACTION SHOW THE E-6 REGIMENT

NOW TO HAVE A MISSION (A) TO SECURE THE AREA WEST OF THE VAM CO DONG RIVER IN DUC HUE DISTRICT OF HAU NGHIA AND ADJACENT HIEU THIEN DISTRICT OF TAY NINH, AND (B) TO ESCORT RESUPPLY UNITS FROM THE CAMBODIAN BORDER (PRESUMABLY PARROTS BEAK AREA) TO NVA/VC BASE AREAS TO HO BO AND BOI LOI WOODS.

6. COMMENT: WITH INDICATIONS OF AN INCREASED SCALE OF NVA/VC INITIATED ACTIONS IN THE NEAR TERM, WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF INCREASED NVA/VC PRESSURE IN HAU NGHIA/TAY NINH AREA, THE SAIGON RIVER CORRIDOR, AND PHUOC TUY PROVINCE TO THE EAST, AND WITH SIGNS OF GREATER SAPPER SABOTAGE EFFORTS BY THE COMMUNISTS IN THE NEAR FUTURE, THE PROSPECT IS FOR AN INTERESTING APRIL

IN MR 3.

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